AMENDMENT TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the specification by marked up replacement paragraphs as follows.

Please replace the paragraph on page 1, lines 7-lines 17, with the following:

--The present application is related to the following co-pending applications, which are filed on even date herewith and incorporated herein by reference:

(1) U.S Patent Application Serial No. ~~--/_____ (Docket No. RIC00042)~~ 09/723,481, entitled "Programmable Access Device for a Distributed Network Access System;"

(2) U.S Patent Application Serial No. ~~--/_____ (Docket No. RIC00043)~~ 09/723,501, entitled "External Processor for a Distributed Network Access System;" and

(3) U.S Patent Application Serial No. ~~--/_____ (Docket No. RIC00044)~~ 09/723,480, entitled "Message, Control and Reporting Interface for a Distributed Network Access System."--

Please replace the paragraph on page 11, lines 3-lines 12, with the following:

Distributed Network Access System Architecture

--With reference again to the figures and in particular with reference to **Figure 2**, there is depicted a high-level block diagram of a portion of a communication network **30** having a distributed network access system **31** in accordance with the present invention. As illustrated, communication network **30** may be coupled to equipment of a number of customers (one of which is represented by a customer router **32** and a server **70**) by an access line **34**. As in **Figure ~~1~~ 2**, access line **34** may employ any of a number of commonly utilized transport network technologies, such as Ethernet, SONET, ATM and frame relay, and may further include unillustrated aggregation hardware. --

Please replace the paragraph on page 14, lines 17-32, with the following:

--Incoming packets received from customer router ~~34~~ 32 at the external interface of PAD **40** are first processed by packet header filter **80**, which distinguishes between various message types using any one or a combination of the protocol type, Source Address (SA), Destination Address (DA), Type Of Service (TOS), Diffserv Codepoint (DSCP), Source Port (SP), Destination Port (DP), and other fields of a packet (e.g., layer 4 and higher layer fields such as the SYN, ACK, RST, and FIN TCP flags) upon which packet header filter **80** is configured to filter. Importantly, in addition to filtering on layer-3 information, packet header filter **80** has the ability to identify higher layer (i.e., layer 4-7) message types or specific fields and forward those messages from/to external processor **42** based on the configured filter parameters. Thus, based upon its filter configuration and the fields of an incoming packet, packet header filter **80** directs the packet either to an external processor **42** via message interface **100** or to a specific marker/policer **82**. It should also be noted that message interface **100** may also inject a packet specified by external processor **42** into either of packet header filters **80** and **90**. --